

Communities urged to fight against wildlife crime

Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa has encouraged community members to work with the South African National Parks (SANParks) and government to preserve South Africa's heritage.



South African field rangers

“You can become directly involved in combating wildlife crime or you can assist in educating our children, or other members of your community, about not only the importance of wildlife in strengthening our country’s economy, but also in conserving our biodiversity,” Molewa said.

The minister on Saturday paid tribute to Kruger National Park field ranger Respect Mathebula who was killed in a shootout with poachers on 19 July 2018.

Changing work environment

She highlighted the changing work environment of field rangers in South Africa since rhino poaching increased 10 years ago.

“The work of a field ranger became more diverse and complex as these men and women woke each day to continue to lead the way for all of us in conserving our country’s natural wonders,” she said.

Speaking ahead of World Ranger Day, the minister said it was rangers who are at the frontline whether they are battling wildfires, or confronting poachers.

Mathebula was the first ranger to be killed by poachers in the Kruger National Park in more than 50 years.

“The murder of one of our rangers is an act of aggression by unscrupulous individuals and gangs. His death at the hands of alleged rhino poachers is an indication of the severity of the threat our rangers are faced with a daily basis,” the minister said.

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